

22 April 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : National Intelligence Estimates on Soviet  
Military Forces

1. This memorandum attempts to summarize what we have learned from our experience in producing three of the principal NIEs on Soviet military forces--those on intercontinental attach (11-8), strategic defense (11-3), and general purpose forces (11-14). Because these Estimates involved several new departures, we encountered a variety of difficulties with respect to their content as well as the process by which they were produced.

2. Many of the problems concerning the Estimates themselves have been solved. When we started these Estimates, there was a great deal of uncertainty about what was wanted by the principal consumer--uncertainty about such matters as the size, the topics to be covered, the amount of detail and the format for handling disagreements within the intelligence community. In the only high-level reaction we have had to these Estimates, the President's memorandum to the Director on NIE 11-8-70 clarified our uncertainty about these matters.

3. First, this memorandum reflected no concern whatsoever about the length of this 164-page document. He expressed his satisfaction with the "attempt to incorporate a wide range of sources, such as clandestine reports and Soviet SALT statements". Certainly, previous NIEs had been based on all sources of information available, but it was the explicit and extensive review of the evidence in NIE 11-8-70 that was different.

4. Second, there was some controversy regarding the treatment of differences of views among the members of the intelligence community. The President's memorandum settled this disagreement by noting his satisfaction with the "frequent sharply-defined, clearly argued discussions of various contested issues". On this basis, it is clear that differences on substantive issues should be highlighted and fully explained in the text of the Estimate.

5. There was also some uncertainty about the inclusion of alternative force models in Estimates. The President's memorandum clarified this issue by commenting favorably about:

- "The alternative force models based on explicit differences in underlying assumptions and the attempt to define which were the more likely models."
- "The quantitative detail for each model which illustrates the differences between the models and gives an operational meaning to some of the general statements."

6. In sum, the President's memorandum is an authoritative endorsement of the scope of coverage, level of specificity, and method of presentation in NIE 11-8-70. It remains to be determined how much detail the President and his advisers would like to have repeated from year to year. There is no question, however, about the kind of document they want.

7. It is still necessary to examine whether we should continue to produce military estimates as we did this year. Highly simplified, the process involved the formation of a DDI/DDS&T task force with responsibility for the preparation

and staffing of what the Director called "the heart of these estimates". These portions of the estimate included a detailed statement of the evidence and analysis dealing with such topics as force levels, strategic objectives, political and economic factors, and research, development, and testing. It provided a foundation for the development and discussion of projections for the future. ONE was charged with the drawing together the major judgments and conclusions and providing a brief statement of evidence and analyses. In 11-8 and 11-3, both the task force and ONE actually worked on the sections dealing with future trends and projections, and ONE prepared a comprehensive set of conclusions. The chairman of the estimate also had the responsibility for producing and coordinating the final draft for presentation to USIB.

8. In retrospect, it is difficult to allocate all the credit for the success of NIE 11-8-70 or all the blame for the delays and confusion involved in its preparation to either the DDI/DDS&T task force or ONE. However, one thing is clear that without the direct participation of the DDI and DDS&T production offices in the preparation of the basic draft, it would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, to produce NIE 11-8-70 with its detailed discussion of the evidence, analysis of technical matters and force projections for the future--the very characteristics noted by the President. This leads to the conclusion that the responsibility for producing the "heart" of the estimate should continue to be that of the DDI and DDS&T production offices which have the continuing responsibility for analyzing and producing intelligence in these fields. Nevertheless, all who have participated in the production of the three estimates would agree that the process did not work smoothly in all respects. The next cycle of estimates should be easier because many of the uncertainties about what is wanted have been clarified, and because we should be able to improve the effectiveness of the process.

9. In addition, we found that interagency coordination was accomplished relatively smoothly and quickly because we had a draft that was fully coordinated within CIA and because the other agencies were represented by knowledgeable people who had the confidence of their principals.

10. Because each of the three estimates we have completed proceeded in a somewhat different fashion, we have a variety of experiences to draw upon. By far the most important factor affecting the process of producing these estimates concerns the individuals involved--their experience in preparing estimates, their understanding of their respective roles, and their sense of common purpose. Specifically, we have learned that:

- The head of the DDI/DDS&T task force should be a substantive expert on the subject of the estimate, should ideally be freed of all other responsibility, and should have a good background in the preparation of NIEs.
- An experienced editor should be assigned to the task to assist the task force.
- The chairman of the estimate should have extensive experience in preparing military estimates and should be in tune with his assignment.
- An ONE staffer should also be a member of the DDI/DDS&T task force so that he can have a full understanding of the considerations and problems involved in the preparation of the basic draft.

11. It is also important that the key individuals involved have a clear sense of common purpose and can work together in accomplishing it. This objective is not always easy to

achieve because no absolute division can be made in the truly substantive responsibilities of the task force and those of ONE. The task force can be charged with preparing a draft which really reflects the detailed knowledge and judgments of the pertinent research offices of the DDI and DDS&T. The chairman of the estimate and his colleagues in ONE can be made responsible for blessing the draft and steering it through coordination. But ultimately, both must identify themselves with the estimate as incorporating their analyses and best judgments if we are to be successful.

12. In order to facilitate a good and effective working relationship, the Director of National Estimates, the DDI, and the DDS&T should consult on the selection of the chairman of a particular estimate and the head of the DDI/DDS&T task force for that estimate. When these appointments have been agreed upon, these five people should meet to instill this sense of common purpose. It will also be necessary to outline the division of responsibilities in more detail than is presented in paragraph 7 above.

13. I have held discussions with both the Director of National Estimates and the Deputy Director for Science and Technology regarding the production of national estimates and they concur in the approach outlined in this memorandum. We are also agreed that it is essential for the three of us to join together in drawing up specific and detailed guidelines for the process itself.



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